

I again thank Senators ROBERTS and KERREY and their staffs for their diligence in spearheading crop insurance reform, and acknowledge Senate Agriculture Chairman LUGAR for his leadership in getting this bill out of the Agriculture Committee and onto the floor of the Senate for a vote.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Illinois controls the time until 11 a.m., of which the Senator from Montana, Mr. BAUCUS, shall have 10 minutes.

The Senator from Washington.

#### WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN EDUCATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, I sat through several days of discussion on education policy as we marked up the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Just last week, I went home and visited schools across Washington State and met with administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

The discussions we had here in Congress and the discussions I had in those classrooms could not have been more different. No wonder so many educators and parents are frustrated with Congress. Too often, what they hear from Congress has nothing to do with the real challenges they are facing.

While some of my colleagues were pushing their agenda of block grants and vouchers here in Washington, DC, the teachers I met with in Washington State were concerned about their ability to teach the basics and maintain discipline in their classrooms.

While these same colleagues of mine sought to diminish accountability, the parents I met with want us to insist that we have the highest possible academic standards in safe and modern classrooms.

While these same colleagues of mine were figuring out ways to shift resources away from meeting specific needs, the students I met with were wondering when there would be enough fully qualified teachers in their classrooms to help them get the individual attention they need to succeed.

Those parents, teachers, and students were shocked when I told them that my amendment to guarantee money for smaller class sizes was rejected by members of the Education Committee. It just does not make sense to them.

I wish that when we discussed ESEA, we had a few of those teachers sitting in the room with us. And whenever the discussion drifted to things that are far from the realities in today's classrooms, I wish those teachers were here to stand up and bring the discussion back to the real challenges our students face, day-in and day-out.

Today, too many teachers see overcrowded classrooms, children who arrive with basic needs unmet, jammed hallways, and tougher curriculum requirements.

Today, too many parents see teachers who are overworked—teachers who spend so much time on discipline it is hard for them to give every child the time and attention they need.

Today, too many students feel their needs are lost and their education is not a priority. All of us want to make sure that schools are safe centers of learning.

To reach their potential, our kids need real help now. They need the common sense solutions that we know can help them succeed.

It is simple. We know what works in education. We know what it takes to help children reach their potential. It is not a great mystery. These are the things that years of research have shown us are effective. They are the things that parents, teachers, and community leaders know make a difference. To show how simple this is, I have listed those ingredients we know work.

I am proud that Democrats are focusing on results with a commonsense agenda. We know that if we want children to succeed in school, they need a highly-motivated, fully-qualified teacher. We know they need a safe and modern classroom. We know they need a small, uncrowded class in which to learn. We know they need a focus on the basics. We know they need high standards and discipline. We know they need support from family and adults. We know they need resources for the classroom.

These are the commonsense policies that serve America's children—the policies that improve education and get results.

But unfortunately, this Congress is ignoring these proven approaches. They are ignoring what works. They do not want money to be targeted to these essential ingredients. They do not want us to focus on making sure that every school has guaranteed resources in each of these areas.

Many of us want to use these key ingredients to make the best schools possible. We want to guarantee that every school has the resources it needs. We want to change our schools—for the better—so we can get the results parents, students, and teachers are demanding.

Some have proposed block grants as the cure-all for education. Today, our

nation's education policy guarantees that specific resources will be targeted to meeting specific needs. That is how responsible budgeting is done. That is how we ensure accountability.

But this Congress is working toward eliminating those guarantees. They do not want money to be guaranteed for reducing class sizes or for technology training for teachers or for modernizing schools. They want to eliminate all of those guarantees, create a pot of money, and give it to the States.

One teacher asked me: "Are there any studies that show that giving all the money to States in block grants actually improves education?"

Of course not. In fact, 35 years ago the American people made the national Government a partner in education because they realized that State and local governments cannot do it all on their own.

Public schools are one of the foundations upon which our democracy is built, and we need to do a better job of helping them perform at the highest levels.

Most disconcerting about these proposals for block grants is they are simply a blank check policy that will diminish the guarantee that education resources go to the students who need them most. Money that currently goes to hiring and training teachers and helping students with special needs—under these proposals could be used "for any education purposes"—anything from building a new lockerroom to redecorating office space.

In response to many who want a better education, some have proposed vouchers. What will that do? Without a doubt, it will drain scarce dollars away from public schools where 90 percent of America's children are trying to learn. Vouchers plans shift taxpayer dollars away from public schools to private and religious schools.

One parent in Washington told me last week: "I don't want you to give me a few hundred dollars to send my kid to another school. I want you to make my school work better."

The real question, and the one we are failing to answer, is: How can we work in partnership with states, educators, and parents to make sure that every student gets the things they need to reach their potential?

Many of my colleagues are asking the wrong question. They ask: How can the Federal Government's role in education be eliminated? They are talking about process, when we should be focusing on results.

This Congress should be asking: How can the Federal Government support local schools? How can we meet our national education priorities, like making sure every child can read, write, and use a computer?

And how can we help school districts do the things that are hardest for them to do, like hiring new teachers and building new schools?

I am afraid some of my colleagues aren't looking for ways to answer these questions. I am afraid they just want to gut our national education partnership.

In this country, we already have local control over education. State and local school districts set the curriculum. They hire the staff. States set standards and certify teachers. States and localities raise and spend 93 percent of all education funding. A lack of local control is not the problem. It is a lack of sufficient support and resources.

States, school districts, parents, and teachers are demanding that we, at the Federal level, work in partnership to ensure our kids get a good education. What matters to parents is that their kids get the best education possible. Parents don't care how the workload is divided. They care about results. And Democrats are focused on results.

One of the problems with block grants is that—in the budgeting process—they always end up getting cut because those dollars are not longer tied to a specific need. With block grants, our kids end up with fewer educational resources than they had before. In fact, we are already seeing a move underway to give our students fewer resources.

The Republican budget plan passed out of the House could jeopardize our ability to meet the needs in America's schools. Their plan could jeopardize our ability to keep hiring new teachers to make classrooms less crowded. They could jeopardize our ability to provide afterschool programs, to ensure safe and drug-free schools, to modernize old schools, and to build new ones.

Their plan could result in having \$2.6 billion less for education than the President has requested. We shouldn't be shortchanging America's students, but I am concerned that is what the House Republican budget plan would do.

In fact, according the Congressional Budget Office, the Republican budget plan doesn't even keep up with inflation for key domestic investments, like education.

Parents, teachers and students in my home State—and across the country—are asking for help in education.

They want us to work in partnership with them to help their children reach their potential.

They want us to support the commonsense solutions that produce real results for our students.

And when they hear Members of this Congress talking about things that really don't make a difference in the classroom, they get pretty frustrated.

After meeting with and listening to so many frustrated parents and educators, I have come to the floor today to carry their message.

They want us to: Focus on what works. They want us to support the things that make a difference for chil-

dren in the classroom. And they want us to work together in partnership with State and local educators to help children learn to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

I urge my colleagues to hear these calls loud and clear, to respond by bringing the debate here in Congress back to the realities that teachers, students and parents see in their classrooms every day across this country, and to pass a budget that follows our recipe for success by investing in the resources that every student needs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FAMILY FARMERS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I support the pending amendment, which, as I understand, is the Wellstone amendment, a sense-of-the-Senate resolution commending the many farmers—the thousands of farmers and their families—who came to Washington over the last few days to rally in support of what I would call a sensible, sane, rational, and compassionate farm program that would support our farm families throughout this country.

We had farmers from every State. In fact, I listened to one farmer from Alaska who was here, a dairy farmer. So the rally actually was a national rally, one that encompassed all parts of our country.

What I heard, in talking to these farm families from across America, was a plaintive cry for us to have a farm policy in America that recognizes the essential worth, the essential importance, of having a structure of agriculture based upon family farming—widely dispersed, broadly based—rather than having a vertical structure characterized by conglomerates and huge vertical integrators that does not respond to the needs of local areas.

What these farm families were expressing was a frustration, a frustration borne out of their life experiences in knowing that what they have done and what their parents and grandparents before them had done in agriculture, knowing that this had benefited not only our Nation but had benefited the areas in which they lived. Because we had a lot of farm families in rural areas, we had prosperous small towns and communities. We had businesses in those communities. We had good schools and churches. We had a sense of community in rural America. Out of this structure in rural America came the sons and daughters who went

on to colleges—land grant colleges, many of them—and who then became some of the great leaders of our country.

I need not remind those in this body of some of the great leaders in our own Senate who came from rural America, small towns and communities, farm families. I just saw our distinguished former majority and minority leader, Senator Dole, come across the floor. He comes from Russell, KS. You can't find a much smaller town than that. He has dedicated his life to public service. He is a great friend of mine and was a great leader in the Senate. I wonder how many more leaders we will get in this country coming from small towns and rural America when all these small towns have dried up, when there are no more opportunities there.

I think what I heard at this rally was this frustration. The farm families know what they have contributed to the well-being of our country and our communities. Yet now they are being decimated. They see their neighbors, one by one, being driven off the farm because of the economic structure we have in America. In 1998, two Iowa State University economists reported that as many as one-third of Iowa farmers would face serious financial problems if the farm economy did not improve. They would either restructure their operations or go out of business entirely. That was one out of three estimated in 1998.

Earlier this year, an updated study by the same economists concluded that as many as half of all Iowa farmers are classified as financially weak or severely stressed; that is, every other farmer in the State of Iowa is in real trouble.

A couple of farm families spoke to me when I was at the rally on the Mall in response to something I had heard, saying that their churches, which used to be packed on Sunday morning—all the pews were filled—are now half empty, that they can't even afford to pay their own minister any longer. They have a circuit rider who rides to three or four churches a week. So they lack that kind of pastoral counseling upon which families have come to rely. Indeed, we are seeing a wholesale selling out of our farm and ranch families and our rural communities. The stakes are very high.

I heard this great frustration from all of these farm families. Their question to us is: What are you going to do? Is this just some inevitable, invisible hand that is doing this, or are the laws of our country structured so they discriminate unfairly against family farmers? I think the latter is true. There is no invisible handwriting that farm families are a relic of the past, that our farmers have to get bigger and bigger and bigger, that our small towns have to dry up. I think it is because of policies we set in the Congress. I think those policies have to change.